

Defending Family Farmers: Industrial Food Safety Fallout

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Food borne illness

- Annually in US due to food borne pathogens:
 - 76 million sickened
 - 325,000 hospitalized
 - 5,000 deaths
- 2006 Spinach E. coli O157:H7 outbreak
 - 204 sickened
 - 31 developed Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome
 - 5 deaths

1993-2008 E. Coli O157:H7 Outbreaks Associated with Leafy Greens

Date	# sick	Type of leafy green	Processed in bags?	Site of outbreak	Source location
August 1993	53	Salad bar	*	WA	
July 1995	74	Romaine, red leaf lettuce	*	MT	MT, WA
September 1995	20	Romaine or iceberg lettuce	*	ID	
October 1995	11	Lettuce	*	OH	
May 1996	61	Mesclun mix lettuce	Yes	IL, CT, NY	Salinas Valley
June 1996	7	Mesclun mix lettuce	Yes	NY	
May 1998	2	Salad mix	Yes	CA	
September 1998	4	Lettuce	*	MD	
Feb-Mar 1999	72	Iceberg lettuce	*	NE	
September 1999	8	Romaine lettuce	*	CA	Salinas Valley
September 1999	6	Lettuce	*	WA	Salinas Valley
October 1999	47	Lettuce	*	OH, IN	
October 1999	3	Romaine hearts	Yes	OR	Salinas Valley
October 1999	41	Fresh cut Romaine lettuce	Yes	PA	Salinas Valley

July 2002	29	Fresh cut Romaine lettuce	Yes	WA, ID	Salinas Valley
November 2002	24	Fresh cut iceberg lettuce	Yes	IL, WI, MN, SD, UT	Lemoore, CA
September 2003	57	Fresh cut lettuce mix with romaine	Yes	CA	Salinas Valley
September 2003	5	Fresh cut lettuce mix with romaine	Yes	ND	CA
October 2003	16	Fresh cut spinach	Yes	CA	Salinas Valley
November 2004	6	Fresh cut lettuce	Yes	NJ	Salinas Valley
September 2005	23/32	Fresh cut Romaine mix with veg.	Yes	MN, WI, OR	Salinas Valley
Aug-Sept 2006	204	Bagged baby spinach	Yes	26 states	San Juan Valley, CA
November 2006	71	Fresh cut iceberg lettuce	Yes	NY, NJ, PA, DE	San Joaquin Valley, CA
Nov-Dec 2006	81	Fresh cut iceberg lettuce	Yes	MN, IA, WI	San Joaquin Valley, CA
May 2008	10	Fresh cut romaine lettuce	Yes	WA	
September 2008	45	Fresh cut iceberg lettuce	Yes	MI, IL, NY, OR, OH	

Concerns going forward

- Focus on problem areas—e.g. processed product and its handling in transport and retail—rather than imposing blanket and unscientific rules on farmers
- Consider reducing shelf life of bags
- More research of all kinds, but also non-proprietary research on processing
- Preserve organic and traditional farming in food safety rules; small farms are hurt the most by regulation

Concerns going forward

- Disseminate basic, scientifically-based food safety metrics to all farmers; everyone needs to be concerned about food safety
- Create a new comprehensive food safety agency not controlled by meat or processing industries; 95 bills were introduced in the last Congress to reorganize the 15 federal agencies administering at least 30 different food safety laws

Concerns going forward

- Regulate fresh processing separately from fresh produce; there are different risk factors
- The government should test the water; it's a public health issue